

# Redistricting plan signed- Spellman backs commission

By Neil Modie

**OLYMPIA**—A congressional redistricting plan drawn by a temporary commission was signed yesterday by Gov. John Spellman, who strongly endorsed a proposed constitutional amendment establishing a permanent redistricting commission.

Terming it a "very historic" occasion, Spellman also signed a bill to implement the constitutional change if voters approve it in the general election this fall. The proposed amendment, passed by the Legislature, goes directly to the voters without requiring the governor's signature.

"I'm very much in favor of it and have been for years," Spellman said of the concept of having legislative and congressional reapportionment done by a commission instead of the Legislature.

"I think regardless of (political) party, it's in any citizen's best interest to vote this in and to keep this in," he said of the ballot proposition.

A congressional reapportionment was adopted by the Legislature last year but declared invalid in federal court last fall. The court said the Legislature's plan contained excessive population variances among the eight congressional districts.

The Legislature appointed the temporary commission in February to avoid miring itself any longer in the political quagmire of redistricting. It subsequently approved the temporary commission's plan and sent it on to the governor.

"There were a lot of people who made this happen," said Spellman, who was surrounded by a group of Everett civic leaders and by representatives of the League of Women Voters, Common Cause and other good-government organizations that have fought for years for a redistricting commission.

The federal court lawsuit that got the 1982 redistricting plan invalidated was brought by Everett residents who were angry that the city was moved from its traditional place in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District to the 1<sup>st</sup> District dominated by north King County.

## **New districts**

Among other things, the temporary commission's plan puts Everett back in the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The bill immediately moves 323,000 Washington residents to new congressional districts.

The constitutional amendment before voters this fall would remove the requirement that the Legislature handle reapportionment and would turn it over to a five-member commission consisting of two Democratic appointees, two Republicans and a nonvoting chairman chosen by the other four.

Besides creating districts of equal size, the commission would be required to try to create districts with common interests, avoid diluting the voting strength of racial minorities and respect existing local governmental boundaries.